

Claims

1. A method for providing an extended manufacturing environment, comprising:
 receiving, at a manufacturer's server, a communication from a customer of the manufacturer;
 automatically processing the communication at the manufacturer's server; and
 automatically transmitting an order for supplies from the manufacturer's server to a supplier of the supplies, the supplies needed by the manufacturer to manufacture at least one product for the customer.
2. The method of claim 1 wherein the receiving step comprises receiving the communication which comprises an order for the at least one product.
3. The method of claim 2 further comprising running a simulation to determine whether the order for the at least one product can be filled by the manufacturer.
4. The method of claim 1 wherein the receiving step comprises receiving the communication which comprises a request to change an existing order for the at least one product.
5. The method of claim 4 further comprising running a simulation to determine at least one impact of making the change request.
6. The method of claim 5 wherein the running step comprises running the simulation to determine at least one of a loss of ship date, a surcharge for re-assembling the at least one product, and an unexpected increase in price due to a change in sub-components of the at least one product.
7. The method of claim 1 wherein the receiving step comprises receiving the communication which comprises a request for supplies.
8. The method of claim 1 further comprising receiving, at the manufacturer's server, a request for detailed product quality information from the customer.
9. A system for providing an extended manufacturing environment, comprising:
 a manufacturing interface module configured to receive a communication from a customer of a manufacturer, automatically process the communication, and automatically pass control to an ordering module; and

the ordering module configured to automatically transmit an order for supplies to a supplier of the supplies, the supplies needed by the manufacturer to manufacture at least one product for the customer.

10. The system of claim 9 wherein the communication comprises an order for the at least one product.

11. The system of claim 10 further comprising a simulation module configured to run a simulation to determine whether the order for the at least one product can be filled by the manufacturer.

12. The system of claim 9 wherein the communication comprises a request to change an existing order for the at least one product.

13. The system of claim 12 further comprising a simulation module configured to run a simulation to determine at least one impact of making the change request.

14. The system of claim 13 wherein the simulation module is capable of running the simulation to determine at least one of a loss of ship date, a surcharge for re-assembling the at least one product, and an unexpected increase in price due to a change in sub-components of the at least one product.

15. The system of claim 9 wherein the communication comprises a request for supplies.

16. The system of claim 9 wherein the manufacturing interface module is further configured to receive from the customer a request for detailed product quality information.

17. An article of manufacture having computer-readable program means embodied therein for providing an extended manufacturing environment, comprising:

computer-readable program means for receiving, at a manufacturer's server, a communication from a customer of the manufacturer;

computer-readable program means for automatically processing the communication at the manufacturer's server; and

computer-readable program means for automatically transmitting an order for supplies from the manufacturer's server to a supplier of the supplies, the supplies needed by the manufacturer to manufacture at least one product for the customer.